

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## U.S. Goals in Afghanistan Are Meeting with Success, President Obama Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says the U.S. mission in Afghanistan will be successful if U.S. forces leave behind a country where the Afghan government and people can provide for their own security, and al-Qaida is unable to attack the United States, its allies or its overseas interests.

Speaking in a June 29 press conference at the White House, Obama said both goals are meeting with success as the United States prepares to draw down 10,000 troops by the end of 2011, and an additional 23,000 by the end of summer 2012.

"The tide of war is receding. We have shifted to a transition phase," the president said.

Even before al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan on May 2, Obama said, U.S. forces were able to severely cripple the organization's capacities and had eliminated some in its middle and upper leadership ranks.

"They are having a great deal of difficulty operating, a great deal of difficulty communicating and financing themselves, and we are going to keep the pressure on," Obama said.

At the same time he said U.S. and international forces have been able to "ramp up" the training of Afghan troops, adding an additional 100,000 army and police since he announced a surge of U.S. forces in December 2009.

The newly trained Afghan security forces will add to the Afghanistan government's capacity to defend the country and prevent a collapse that could allow extremist elements to take control of the country again, he said.

Obama said U.S. troops have also been drawn down from Iraq, with the remainder scheduled to leave by the end of 2011. Although Iraq has continued to face violent attacks, he said, it has "been able to maintain a democratic government and to tamp down violence there" without the need for American soldiers.

"We think a similar approach makes sense in Afghanistan," he said.

"We will ... draw them down in a responsible way that will allow Afghanistan to defend itself and will give us the operational capacity to continue to put pressure on al-Qaida until that network is entirely defeated," he said.

## U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN LIBYA HAS PROTECTED THOUSANDS

The president was also asked about the involvement of U.S. forces in Libya, and he said they had been deployed both for U.S. national security interests and "because it's the right thing to do."

He said the U.N. Security Council mandate that authorized operations by an international coalition including the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates had called on the coalition to ensure that Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's forces could not massacre Libyan civilians.

In response, U.S. forces took out Libyan air-defense systems to allow the international coalition to implement a no-fly zone that could provide the Libyan people with humanitarian protection, he said.

"The Libyan regime's capacity has been greatly reduced as a consequence of our operation," he said.

The president said there have not been any U.S. forces on the ground in Libya, and there are "no risks of additional escalation."

"We have done exactly what we said to do under a U.N. mandate, and we have protected thousands of lives in the process. And, as a consequence, a guy who was a state sponsor of terrorist operations ... is pinned down, and the noose is tightening around him," Obama said.

Obama called on Qadhafi to step down from power and "give his people a fair chance to live their lives without fear."

So long as Qadhafi is heading the Libyan government and controls large numbers of troops, "the Libyan people are going to be in danger of counteroffensives and of retribution," and it will be hard for the United States to feel confident that they will be protected, he said.

## President Obama Seeks Balanced Approach to Economy, Deficit, Debt Limits

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says the United States must develop a balanced approach to reduce its federal deficit and to extend its debt limit to strengthen the economy, create more jobs for Americans and avoid potential financial turmoil.

Speaking at a White House press conference June 29, Obama said that reducing the deficit will require substantial, long-term budget cuts across all agencies and

government programs, regardless of their popularity or importance. And deficit reduction would also require an increase, though limited, in some government revenue.

"We're going to need to look at the whole budget ... and we've got to eliminate waste wherever we find it, and make some tough decisions about worthy priorities," Obama said.

That will mean that he and the Congress will have to trim defense spending, entitlement programs such as Social Security and other areas of the federal government, Obama added.

Obama has been meeting with senior leaders in the Senate and the House of Representatives to seek agreement on budget cuts and other measures that will be needed to win passage of the federal budget and on measures to extend the United States' \$14.29 trillion debt ceiling. Congress has until approximately August 2 to extend the U.S. debt limit to protect the government's credit rating and borrowing capacity in the global financial markets. The negotiations have already identified approximately \$1 trillion in spending cuts.

Failure to reach an agreement could lead to a U.S. default that would send the price of U.S. borrowing up sharply and worsen the country's current fiscal position, Obama said. It would also have unintended consequences for global financial markets, he said.

"It's not often that Washington sees both parties agree on the scale and the urgency of the challenge at hand," he said. "Nobody wants to put the creditworthiness of the United States in jeopardy. Nobody wants to see the United States default."

Global financial markets and foreign governments are monitoring Washington's decisionmaking on raising the debt ceiling even as debt crises are affecting nations in Europe and elsewhere. The United States has yet to face a situation in which it was unable to pay its obligations as a result of reaching the debt limit, according to a U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS) report published in February.

"In the past, the debt limit has always been raised before the debt reached the limit," the CRS report says. The full faith and credit of the United States and its currency, the U.S. dollar, underpins some international currency trading and lending across global markets.

Earlier in the day the International Monetary Fund issued a statement calling on the U.S. Congress to raise the debt limit, and warned that failing to do that could cause a substantial increase in interest rates and a "severe shock to the economy and world financial markets."

For weeks, Vice President Biden has been meeting regularly with senior leaders from both political parties in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. Members in both chambers have been demanding substantial reductions in federal spending before they will consider an increase in the debt ceiling.

Republican members of Congress have objected to raising government revenue by eliminating some tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans and for oil companies — actions that the president said are needed. Republicans have also sought substantial reductions in federal spending, arguing that deficits create a substantial drag on the U.S. economy and on job creation. Unemployment in the United States currently stands at 9.1 percent.

### **Presidential Adviser Announces New Counterterrorism Strategy**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama's new National Strategy for Counterterrorism formalizes the approach his administration has been pursuing and adapting for the past two and a half years to prevent terrorist attacks and to ensure al-Qaida's demise, Obama's chief homeland security and counterterrorism adviser says.

"This counterterrorism strategy is only one part of President Obama's larger National Security Strategy," presidential adviser John Brennan said in prepared remarks June 29 in Washington. "Our counterterrorism policies do not define our entire foreign policy; rather, they are a vital part of — and are designed to reinforce — our broader national security interests."

Those interests include U.S. security, prosperity, respect for universal values and global cooperation to meet shared challenges, according to a White House fact sheet.

Brennan said the president's broader foreign policy and national security initiatives help to achieve counterterrorism goals by addressing the conditions that can sometimes lead individuals to join terrorist groups.

"Peaceful political, economic and social progress undermines the claim that the only way to achieve change is through violence. It can be a powerful antidote to the disillusionment and sense of powerlessness that can make some individuals more susceptible to violent ideologies," he said.

The principal focus of U.S. counterterrorism efforts is "the network that poses the most direct and significant threat to the United States, and that is al-Qaida, its affiliates and its adherents," Brennan added.

Brennan called the May 2 killing of al-Qaida leader

Osama bin Laden by U.S. special operations forces the “biggest blow against al-Qaida yet” and said that though the group is in its decline, the struggle is not over.

The United States, he said, is strengthening intelligence, military capabilities, homeland security, aviation security and a full range of law enforcement tools. Brennan added that as “no one nation alone can bring about al-Qaida’s demise,” the United States has partnered in the struggle with multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and NATO, as well as regional organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union (AU). He said the United States has also increased efforts to build the capacity of partners “so they can take the fight to al-Qaida in their own countries.”

Brennan said that in all actions, the United States would uphold its core values, such as respect for human rights and opportunity, dignity and justice for all people.

“Guided by the strategy we’re releasing today, we will never waver in our efforts to protect the American people,” Brennan said. “We will continue to use every tool at our disposal, and apply them wisely. We will continue to forge strong partnerships around the world and build a culture of resilience here at home. And as Americans, we will continue to uphold the ideals and core values that inspire the world, define us as people and help keep us safe.”

### **Climate Report: Warmer Temperatures, Extreme Events Mark 2010**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — The year 2010 ranked as one of the two warmest years on record, according to an assessment compiled by almost 370 scientists in 45 countries. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released 2010 State of the Climate, an annual report, on June 27.

The findings present “multiple indicators, same bottom line conclusion,” according to a NOAA briefing paper. “Consistent and unmistakable signal from the top of the atmosphere to the bottom of the oceans: The world continues to warm.”

Compiled by NOAA with the American Meteorological Society, the report tracks 41 different climate indicators, including temperatures (both lower and upper atmospheres), precipitation, greenhouse gases, humidity, sea ice and glaciers.

“We’re continuing to closely track these indicators,” said Thomas R. Karl, director of NOAA’s National Climatic Data Center, “because it is quite clear that the climate of the past cannot be assumed to represent the climate of the

future.”

Air temperature was the second-warmest on record, the data show, with the Arctic warming at about twice the rate of the lower latitudes.

Two of the planet’s major climate patterns created conditions for extreme weather events in various places in 2010. The year began with the warm El Niño pattern in the Pacific Ocean, but transitioned to its “cool sister,” La Niña, by July, which created below-normal cyclone activity in the Pacific basin without the ocean heat, which drives the fierce, spinning winds. But La Niña did send record spring rains to Australia, the most severe storms recorded there in more than a century.

The Arctic Oscillation entered what is known as its “negative phase” in 2010. This means that cold Arctic air pushed its way farther south than normal, and as a result some North American cities added new pages to the record books keeping track of their snow and ice. Farther south, cities accustomed to mild winters also saw unusual cold. The same weather pattern gave Britain its coldest winter in more than 30 years and arctic conditions to other parts of Europe.

The 2010 weather conditions also led to Arctic melting, which reduced sea ice at the northernmost point of the world to an unusually low level. Glacial melt in Greenland shrank ice sheets at a rate not seen since 1958, and Alpine glaciers shrank for the 20th consecutive year.

But Antarctica was a different story, with the average sea ice volume reaching a record maximum, as the result of a pattern of unusual atmospheric variability called the Antarctic Oscillation, which kept cold air in the south.

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